

Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) on Management of COVID-19 Cases

(For overview, please refer to [table](#).)

The following guidance refers to management of COVID-19 cases in Institutions of Higher Education within the City of Chicago. Recommendations may change depending on local epidemiology which can be viewed on Chicago's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#). Questions may be directed to the CDPH Youth Settings Team at covidschools@chicago.gov.

Key Points (updated Jan 27, 2022)

- In accordance with the [CDC's updated guidelines](#):
 - The isolation period for individuals who have been infected with SARS-CoV2 has been reduced to 5 days.
 - The duration of quarantine for individuals who have been exposed to an infected individual and who are not up-to-date on vaccination has been decreased from 10 days to 5 days, provided that these individuals can consistently mask on days 6-10.
- IHEs should continue to promote vaccination as a key strategy for preventing COVID-19 on campuses. Updated information and communications tools can be found at chi.gov/covidvax.
- Messaging to students and staff around continued safe COVID-19 practices and community mitigation practices both on-campus and off-campus to protect the campus community remains critical.

COVID-19 Reporting to CDPH

IHEs must report to CDPH outbreaks, defined as 5 or more linked cases of COVID-19 occurring within 14 calendar days of each other, within 24 hours of identifying the outbreak. This does not replace notification through electronic laboratory reporting (ELR) or other healthcare provider reporting methods. Cases should be reported using the secure CDPH COVID-19 Online Case Report Form at <https://redcap.link/chicovidreport> (select the option "Community congregate setting: single case or cluster of 2 or more cases") or via a separate submission mechanism coordinated with CDPH.

In order to complete the online case report form, you will need the following information:

- Known campus exposure locations (dormitory, dining hall, classroom, other public setting)
- Total number of classrooms impacted
- Total number of students thought to be exposed
- Total number of staff thought to be exposed
- The positive individual's reported or observed symptom onset date
- The positive individual's last date on campus prior to isolation

- Length of isolation period recommended
- Date of student/staff notification (if completed by time of report)
- Additional optional information includes test date (if known), testing provider (if known).

Campus Contact Tracing

Given your access to staff and student records, the need for prompt notification to close contacts, and the ability to distribute mass communication, your institution is best positioned to conduct on-campus contact tracing and notification. Support from CDPH can be requested by emailing covidschools@chicago.gov, but the below should be completed as soon as possible. CDPH will conduct additional follow-up of off-campus close contacts if necessary.

Contact Tracing First Steps

- Above all, ensure the identity of the positive individual is protected.
- Interview the staff member or student by telephone as soon as you receive a verbal or written report that they tested positive. Questions to ask include:
 - Were they were diagnosed through a test?
 - If so, what type (e.g., PCR, antigen, home test, blood test).
 - If they had only an antibody (blood test) and they have not had any symptoms, no further action is required.
 - What was the test date?
 - What was the last day they were on campus? (Confirm by checking classroom schedules, attendance files)
 - If symptoms, ask the first day of their symptoms.
 - If NO symptoms, confirm the test date.
- Elicit close contacts (described below)
- Complete the CDPH Online COVID-19 Case Report Form: <https://redcap.link/chicovidreport> (select the option “Community congregate setting: single case or cluster of 2 or more cases”)

Determining Who is a Close Contact

- By definition, close contacts are individuals with whom the positive case was within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more cumulatively over a 24-hour period, **starting 2 days prior to their first day of symptoms (or for asymptomatic individuals their test date) through their last day on campus.**
- Roommates should always be considered a close contact if they shared a room with the case during the above time period.

Isolation/Quarantine Recommendations

Definitions:

- **Isolation** is used to separate people **infected** with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, from people who are not infected. These individuals can have symptoms or no symptoms (asymptomatic). People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific “sick room” or area and using a separate bathroom (if available).

- **Quarantine** is used to keep someone who **might have been exposed** to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others and monitor their health.
- **Symptoms:** People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of reported symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to SARS-CoV-2, but most commonly occur within the first 5 days post exposure. Symptoms can include:
 - Fever (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher) or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - This list does not include all possible symptoms, and individuals may experience any, all, or none of these symptoms.
- Fully vaccinated is defined as having:
 - Completed the second of a two-part primary mRNA vaccine series at least two weeks ago, OR
 - Completed a single dose of the J & J vaccine at least two weeks ago.
- Up-to-date on vaccination is **defined** as having:
 - completed a primary vaccine series (Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J) AND having received a booster if eligible, OR
 - completed a primary vaccine series (Pfizer or Moderna <5 months; J&J vaccine < 2 months) **and are not yet eligible for a booster.**

Isolation for students or staff with a positive test:

- Individuals who test positive for COVID must stay at home for 5 calendar days after symptom onset (or if asymptomatic, positive test result). Date of symptom onset (or positive test result) is considered day 0. On day 6, positive individuals:
 - May return to normal activities, **as long as they remain symptom-free** (including at least 24 hours without a fever when not using medications) AND they can always maintain appropriate masking and physical distancing and through day 10.
 - Should refrain from participating in activities in which they cannot appropriately mask or distance on days 6-10 after date of onset.
 - Should continue to isolate on days 6-10 if they cannot appropriately mask during this time.

For student or staff with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, regardless of if they have a known contact:

- CDPH strongly recommends testing for all staff and students with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status.
- If a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19, they should be referred to their healthcare provider or student health for testing and isolated while awaiting the test result.
 - PCR or antigen (Ag) testing is acceptable.
 - If an Ag detection test is negative and there is a high clinical suspicion of COVID-19, confirm with PCR, ideally within 2 days of the initial Ag test.
- If a symptomatic student or staff member tests negative, ensure it has been 24-hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication) and with improved symptoms before allowing them to return to campus.

Quarantine Options for student or staff with an identified close contact exposure:

- On December 28, 2021, CDC provided [shortened quarantine options](#) to reduce the burden of being out of work/school and to promote adherence to quarantine restrictions and contact tracing efforts. IHEs should recognize that this comes with a residual risk of transmission.
 - Students or staff who are **NOT up-to-date on vaccination**:
 - Must quarantine at home for 5 calendar days after last exposure to the COVID-19 case. Date of last exposure is considered day 0.
 - Should be tested on or after day 5 after exposure.
 - May return to normal activities on day 6, [as long as they remain symptom-free](#) AND the individual can always maintain physical distancing and masking through day 10.
 - Should refrain from participating in activities in which they cannot appropriately mask or distance on days 6-10 after exposure.
 - Should continue to quarantine if they cannot appropriately mask during days 6-10.
- **Exceptions:** Students or staff with close contact to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 who meet the following criteria do NOT have to quarantine.
 - Someone who is up-to-date on vaccine and shows no symptoms of COVID-19
 - However, those who are up-to-date on vaccination should get tested 5 + days after their exposure, even they don't have symptoms.
 - Individuals who are up-to-date on vaccine must still wear a mask indoors in public for 10 days following exposure (or must maintain indoor masking per current local, state, or federal requirements)
 - Someone who had and recovered from COVID-19 illness in the previous 90 days and remains symptom-free.

Testing Recommendations

- CDPH strongly recommends testing for all staff and students with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
- Close contacts should monitor their symptoms and get tested at the following intervals:
 - Up-to-date on vaccination: 5 days after exposure

- Not vaccinated or not up-to-date: Immediately upon notification, and if negative, again 5-7 days after exposure.
 - At any time if symptomatic, regardless of vaccination status.
- Depending on IHE resources, students and staff needing testing should be referred to student health or call their healthcare provider to arrange for testing. If other testing options are needed, refer to the [City of Chicago's coronavirus testing website](#).

Considerations for Expanded Testing in Response to a Positive Individual

In some IHE settings, broader testing, beyond close contacts, may be recommended as a part of a strategy to control COVID-19 transmission on campus.

- Residence halls may be settings with the potential for rapid and pervasive spread. Expanded testing might include testing of all people who were in proximity of an individual confirmed to have COVID-19 (e.g., those who shared communal spaces or bathrooms), or testing all individuals within a shared setting (e.g., testing all residents on a floor or an entire residence hall).

Notifications

- Notify the identified close contacts that they were exposed to someone with COVID-19 on campus. It is recommended that you notify exposed staff and students of the exposure via a preferred, successful method of communication on your campus. A sample close contact notification template is included at the end of this document for those you may be unable to reach by other means or if you choose to send a written notification.
 - Instruct close contacts who are not up-to-date on vaccination to quarantine for 5 days from the last day of contact with the person who self-reported (do not reveal the identity of the positive case).
 - Close contacts should monitor their symptoms and get tested at the following intervals:
 - Up-to-date on vaccination: 5 days after exposure
 - Not vaccinated or not up-to-date: Immediately upon notification, and if negative, again 5-7 days after exposure
 - At any time if symptomatic, regardless of vaccination status
 - Close contacts should wear masks at all times during the 10 days after their exposure, regardless of vaccination status.
- All IHE staff and students, regardless of whether they are close contacts or not, should be notified of the positive case, while maintaining confidentiality. You may use the general notification letter template at the end of this document as a guide. Public dashboards are also an acceptable means of keeping your campus community aware of the COVID-19 cases at your IHE.

Considerations for Out-of-State Students and the Travel Order

Given the current high burden of COVID-19 in the United States, students arriving to IHE campuses from high-incidence states should plan to follow CDPH's [COVID-19 Travel Advisory](#). Parents or guardians from high-incidence states visiting Chicago should follow the same guidelines as anyone else traveling inbound to Chicago from a high-incidence state.

Considerations for Entry Screening Testing and Screening Testing

Entry screening testing (testing prior to the beginning of each term) and screening testing throughout the term, in combination with other mitigation strategies (e.g., masking, social distancing, hand washing), may prevent or reduce COVID-19 transmission on campus and increase timeliness of outbreak detection and response. IHEs should refer to the CDC interim considerations for testing, screening, and outbreak response for IHEs.

If a testing approach is implemented, ensure short turn-around time of results, adequate staffing of student health services, and the ability to refer students to convenient testing centers. A point-of-contact at your school should be selected to ensure reporting of positive tests and exposures to CDPH as below.

Considerations for On-Campus or Dormitory-Style Housing

- Individuals who share dormitory or suite space should be considered a household.
- Temporary, alternative living arrangements may be considered from days 0-5 for positive individuals who share dormitory space with someone who is immunosuppressed, at increased risk of severe disease, or unvaccinated.

Considerations for Intercollegiate Athletic Competition

- For those with a **positive test** who have been in **isolation** for five days, participants must be asymptomatic for > 24 hours and be able to wear a well-fitting mask at all times on days 6-10 post symptom onset date (or positive test).
 - Participation in athletic activities between days 6 and 10 without a mask can be considered following a negative rapid antigen test **on day of competition**.
- For those who have been exposed:
 - Participants that are up-to-date on vaccination must be able to wear a well-fitting mask at all times during the 10 days following an exposure.
 - Participants who are not up-to-date on vaccination and are returning from quarantine must be able to wear a well-fitting mask at all times during the days following an exposure.

During days 6 through 10 of quarantine: Participation in athletic activities without a mask can be considered regardless of vaccine status following a **negative PCR/NAAT test performed on or after day 5**.
- It is advised to require up-to-date vaccination and routine screening testing for participation in intercollegiate athletics.

Cleaning

IHEs should follow [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/cleaning-disinfection.html).

Additional Resources

www.chicago.gov/coronavirus

[CDC Guidance for IHEs](#)

[City of Chicago Reopening Guidance](#)

[American College Health Association Guidelines](#)

Table 1. COVID-19 Quarantine Guide (For those Identified as Close Contacts) Based on Vaccine Status

| If you: | Do this: |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have completed a primary vaccine series (Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J) AND have received a booster if eligible, OR • Have completed a primary mRNA vaccine series (Pfizer or Moderna <5 mo ago, J&J vaccine <2 mo ago) and are not yet eligible for a booster | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a mask around others for 10 days. • Test on day 5, if possible. <p><i>If a person develops symptoms, they should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not caused by COVID-19.</i></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have completed the primary vaccine series but have not received a booster if eligible (Pfizer or Moderna ≥5 mo ago or J&J vaccine ≥2 mo ago), OR • Have not completed a primary vaccine series (two weeks after second dose) OR • Have never been vaccinated against COVID-19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home for 5 days. • Can return on day 6 but continue to wear a mask at all times around others, days 6-10. • Test on day 5, if possible. • Avoid travel. <p><i>If a person develops symptoms, they should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not caused by COVID-19.</i></p> |

Notification Templates

CLOSE CONTACT COMMUNICATION

Subject: Exposure to COVID-19 Case at _(FACILITY)_

Dear _(Individual's Name)_,

We are writing to update you on a recent development regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). We have learned that a _(FACILITY)_ employee/student has been diagnosed with COVID-19. You were identified as a close contact of this individual.

You should monitor your health starting now through _(DATE of 10 days after last exposure to positive case, or end of shortened quarantine period if your IHE has chosen one of those options)_. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

If you are up-to-date on vaccination, including a booster if eligible, you do not need to quarantine. It is recommended that you get tested 5 days after exposure. You must continue to wear a mask at all times when indoors for the next 10 days.

If you are not up-to-date on vaccination, you should not go to work or school and should avoid public places for 5 days. In addition, you should get tested immediately and if that test is negative, get tested again 5-7 days after exposure. You must continue to wear a mask at all times when indoors for the next 10 days.

If you develop [symptoms of COVID-19](#), please contact your healthcare provider to discuss evaluation and testing. Any individuals who are sick with or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and away from others for at least 5 days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 1 day (24 hours) from last fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer. See the Chicago Department of Public Health's [guidance on what to do if you are sick](#). If your symptoms are severe, such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or difficulty waking up, or bluish lips or face, please seek the closest emergency department or call 9-1-1 immediately.

Close contacts of positive cases are encouraged to contact their healthcare provider to arrange for testing. If other testing options are needed, refer to the [City of Chicago's coronavirus testing website](#). Remember that even if you test negative, you must still complete the full quarantine period. If you test positive, you must stay home for at least 5 days after your test date. If your symptoms get better and you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours, you can return to your normal daily activities after 5 days of isolation. If your symptoms have not improved or you still have a fever, you must remain in isolation.

For any additional COVID-19 questions or support, please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus for the most reliable information. If you do not find the information you need on the website, email coronavirus@chicago.gov.

The health and wellness of our staff and students are the highest priority of _(FACILITY)_. We continue to follow Chicago Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines as we ensure proper protocols and preventative measures are in place for the health and safety of our staff and patrons. Please contact us at _(FACILITY CONTACT INFORMATION)_ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*This version was released on 1/27/2022. It may be updated with new guidance.
Please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus to find the latest version.*

GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Subject: Confirmed COVID-19 Case at _(FACILITY)_

Dear Staff and Families,

We are writing to update you on a recent development regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). We have learned that a _(FACILITY)_ employee/student has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

[The employee/student was last at the facility on (DATE) - only to be included if it can be done without obviously identifying the individual. If needed, give a broad date like "the week of _____."] To ensure the health and safety of our families and staff, following CDC guidance, _(FACILITY)_ [will ensure/has conducted] a thorough cleaning and disinfection of our facility.

Students and staff who have been identified as having been in close contact with this individual [will be/have been] notified via a separate communication. As a reminder, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period. Those who had brief, casual contact with an infected individual are not considered at great risk of transmission and, for most people, the illness is generally mild and can be safely managed at home. As always, everyone should monitor their health and stay at home if they develop symptoms. Anyone who develops severe symptoms should seek medical care immediately.

We continue to follow Chicago Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines as we ensure proper protocols and preventative measures are in place for the health and safety of our staff and patrons.

Public Health Guidance

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If you or your child develop symptoms of COVID-19, please contact your medical provider to discuss whether you need to be evaluated in person or tested.

For severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or difficulty waking up, or bluish lips or face, please seek the closest emergency department or call 9-1-1 immediately.

Any individuals who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home away from others and get tested. Those who are diagnosed with COVID-19 must stay home and away from others for at least 5 days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 1 day (24 hours) from last fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer.

For any additional COVID-19 questions or support, please visit www.chicago.gov/coronavirus for the most reliable information. If you do not find the information you need on the website, email coronavirus@chicago.gov. The health and wellness of our staff and students are the highest priority of _(FACILITY)_. Please contact us at _(FACILITY CONTACT INFORMATION)_ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

SIGNATURE
(FACILITY LEADERSHIP NAME)